United Nations DP/2004/31

Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund

Distr.: General
9 June 2004

Original: English

Annual session 2004
14 to 23 June 2004, Geneva
Item 20 of the provisional agenda
Gender in UNDP

Management response to "Transforming the mainstream: gender in UNDP"*

Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to recommend that UNDP implement the actions outlined in the 'next steps' portion of the present management response.

I. Context

1. In January 2004, UNDP shared with the Executive Board an assessment of gender mainstreaming efforts, entitled "Transforming the mainstream: gender in UNDP". The report featured major achievements and key challenges in gender mainstreaming drawn from UNDP experience and the shared concerns of other partners. To quote the report, "Gender mainstreaming means identifying gaps through the use of gender-disaggregated data; it involves developing strategies to close those gaps, putting resources into implementation and holding individuals and institutions accountable for the results. Despite much progress in many areas, the development community is falling short on all these issues."

*The collection of data required to present the Executive Board with the most current information has delayed submission of this document.

04-38436 (E) 110604

2. Most mainstream institutions such as UNDP, Governments and donors, pursue a dual objective of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women through mainstreaming as a strategy for programming and as a process for internal transformation. According to the report, "mainstreaming gender and bridging gender gaps in ways that are effective and measurable remains a challenge to the development community, North and South".

3. The report highlights issues that require particular attention in UNDP with regards to the institutional culture and practices that may hamper gender mainstreaming work. These include:

(a) *Compartmentalized ways of working:* the need for integrated approaches and tools, and the capacity to use them;

(b) *Ensuring women-specific programmes that are strategic:* the need for dedicated core resources for gender programming within the core practices;

(c) *Poverty and the environment:* the need to take leadership in new issues, such as land rights;

(d) *Measurement of results:* the need for gender-related targets and for accountability of staff and managers in this regard, particularly with respect capacity development; and

(e) *In-house gender expertise:* the need to invest in dedicated in-house gender expertise to build internal capacities for effective gender mainstreaming.

II. Major findings of the assessment report

4. UNDP's gender mainstreaming efforts are analyzed in this broader context, with focus on four key areas:

(a) Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and reducing human poverty;

(b) Fostering democratic governance;

(c) Energy and the environment for sustainable development; and

(d) Crisis prevention and recovery.

Achieving the MDGs and reducing human poverty.

5. The assessment underscores that although "the macroeconomic framework is a strategic arena for engagement to transform the mainstream; it is still a relatively neglected area". It places UNDP in a particularly favourable position "to engage in policy dialogue with Governments on gender, and to bring expertise of academia and voices of civil society organizations to the spaces where decisions are made: in ministries of finance and planning".

6. It takes positive note of tools developed by UNDP for policy analysis with a gender perspective and for mainstreaming gender in national human development reports. It also calls for "investments in specific programme tools, in order to provide practitioners with the necessary technical skills and expertise." The

assessment notes that there have been missed opportunities to use disaggregated data and gender analysis in PRSPs and MDG-related activities.

Fostering democratic governance.

7. The assessment highlights successful approaches supported by UNDP to increase women's participation in government and to mainstream gender in governance interventions. "The examples from Uganda Egypt, Turkey, Bulgaria and Chile underscore the importance of alliances, resources and the political will to move forward", according to the assessment.

8. It also underscores three areas for future work: more support to gender responsive budgeting; strengthening the capacities of women to participate in the different branches of government; and development of staff capacities, including technical skills for gender mainstreaming in the design of programmes.

Energy and environment for sustainable development.

9. The assessment highlights the role of UNDP in providing "useful and innovative tools, strategies and guidelines produced in partnership with NGOs, research and government bodies, to enable planners and project managers deal with the 'how-to' of mainstreaming gender in environment" and energy. The UNDP entry point at the level of environmental governance could help address gender issues in a more strategic and potentially transformative way. The poverty-environment-gender nexus seems to be a strategic opportunity for a comprehensive, effective approach to gender mainstreaming across sectors. The assessment emphasizes the need for UNDP to bring the voices of women into national strategies for sustainable development; to ensure that women are involved in participatory resource planning; to strengthen policy and regulatory frameworks to protect women's access to natural resources and the shift from energy supply to the provision of energy services. Recommended areas for future work include land tenure, inheritance rights, resource allocation, and accountable, transparent local governance.

Crisis prevention and recovery

10. UNDP is in a critical position at the country level where it is able to promote a "multi-faceted approach to address gender issues in conflict and post-conflict reconstruction". This includes the promotion of women's role in peace building and recovery processes, in line with Security Council Resolution 1325, with the potential for legal and institutional changes in transition-to-recovery programmes.

11. During an informal session of the Executive Board in January 2004, members of the Board commended UNDP for its candid and insightful assessment of both progress and challenges. It was recommended that gender would be on the agenda for a formal review of this report and that UNDP provide a corporate response to the challenges raised in the assessment. The Board also expressed interest in the major evaluation of UNDP work starting in 2004 in which critical issues would be explored in more depth.

III. Management response

12. The UNDP MYFF 2004-2007 identifies gender equality as one of five 'drivers' for all services and programmes to address. Yet, as experience to date has shown, while the articulation of gender equality as a cross-cutting goal represents a commitment, ensuring follow-up action and compliance with the policy remains a problem. Consequently, UNDP is instituting two levels of action designed to enhance programme delivery and accountability. The present management response will focus on:

(a) Strengthening strategic programming and accountability; and

(b) Management arrangements, capacities, commitment, resources.

A. Strengthening strategic programming and accountability

13. Two priority areas have become the focus of strategic programming and capacity development in the UNDP response to gender mainstreaming: mainstreaming gender equality in the work on MDGs, and strengthening capacity to use gender-responsive budgeting in building economic governance programmes.

Gender and the Millennium Development Goals

14. UNDP supports gender mainstreaming at the country level through a set of mutually reinforcing approaches. In the context of common country assessments (CCAs) and United Nations development frameworks (UNDAFs), UNDP is in unique position to deepen its gender mainstreaming efforts and take the lead in coordinating the United Nations system to align these instruments with the MDGs and achieve greater harmonization.

15. UNDP plays a key role in supporting countries through the processes of MDG targeting, reporting and campaigning using sex-disaggregated data and information for policy advocacy. UNDP is working closely across the board to ensure full participation of civil society organizations and gender advocacy groups in all MDG processes. In 2004, UNDP initiated a global programme in five pilot countries where a comprehensive and inclusive process of mainstreaming gender in all MDG-related areas is under way. Campaigning and budgeting can effectively integrate gender mainstreaming and empower women to demand accountability. This programme is supported by the Millennium trust fund, the Department for International Development and the Government of Japan. UNIFEM is the executing agency.

16. In 2003, UNDP commissioned an initial review of fourteen MDG reports with a gender perspective. The methodology for gender analysis of the MDG reports, and the initial review, were presented at the UNDP-World Bank global workshop on gender and the MDGs in November 2003.

17. A team is currently working to review and analyze all seventy MDG reports in terms of their gender content, ownership by women and processes of participation at the country level. This review will include the voices of a broad spectrum of women and men on the critical issues raised in the assessment report on the next steps towards a transformative agenda. UNDP will launch this report at the Beijing+10 review and at MDG-related events in 2005.

Gender-responsive budgeting

18. The UNDP strategy on gender-responsive budgeting builds on its partnerships with the growing number of actors in the field and on identified gaps in expanding work in this area. UNDP is concentrating on three primary goals:

(a) Expanding capacities to engage in gender budgeting among economists, finance and planning ministries, parliamentarians and advocates from civil society;

(b) Mainstreaming capacity-building approaches in formal government training centres; and

(c) Sharing knowledge, tools and expertise within regional networks and across regions.

19. Training of trainers has started in 17 countries in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, in partnership with the Russian Academy of Public Service. Training in Asia and the Pacific will be co-hosted by the Asia Management Institute and the Centre for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics, based in Manila.

20. The UNDP gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) programme works in close partnership with the UNIFEM GRB initiative. The UNIFEM pilot experience in 20 countries; the expertise, experience and partnerships that it has generated, and the learning from its mid-term evaluation are being used to inform UNDP efforts to vastly upscale the organizational and institutional capacities available to support GRB in a larger number of countries, particularly in connection with work on PRSPs, democratic governance and macro-economic policy-making.

21. The assessment has raised fundamental issues specifically related to the UNDP capacities, commitment and resources for effective gender mainstreaming.

B. Management arrangements: capacities, commitment and resources

22. The assessment report strongly stated that "it is unrealistic to expect a handful of professionals with a tiny budget and no real line authority – often compelled to rely upon temporary staff as well as the goodwill and personal interests of overstretched colleagues – to make a real impact on gender mainstreaming in a large, geographically dispersed organization. UNDP needs to make a greater investment in its in-house gender expertise".

23. The gender programme team in UNDP is led by a small core group of three dedicated gender experts located in the Bureau for Development Policy; three policy advisers based in the SURFs in Katmandu, Dakar and Pretoria; and a knowledge network facilitator based in the Trinidad and Tobago SURF. Beyond its active members, the team includes gender experts, advisers and focal points from all regional bureaux and units at Headquarters. It is linked to the global network of gender focal points in all UNDP country offices. The gender programme team is an example of the global collaboration practised in UNDP.

24. The UNDP practice note on gender equality (November 2002) states that lack of resources is seldom a valid excuse for paying inadequate attention to the gender dimension of every development intervention. "Gender mainstreaming is everybody's responsibility, everyone's job", it stresses. In 2004, a UNDP position

paper was dedicated to the issue of 'walking the talk'. It reaffirms the need to dedicate and, if necessary, reallocate core resources in support of gender mainstreaming.

25. Although the core team in BDP has not increased in numbers or received additional core resources, significant measures have taken internally, in the past few months, in response to the assessment report:

(a) The UNDP gender team, formerly located in the poverty group of the Bureau for Development Policy (BDP), now reports to the Director of that Bureau. This move is in recognition of the fact that the function of this core team is to ensure gender mainstreaming across BDP practices and across the organization.

(b) All BDP programme documents, including proposals under the Global Cooperation Framework and the trust funds, will be cleared by the gender team prior to receiving approval.

(c) Each core practice is required to develop at least one specific gender programme each year, fully funded for implementation, as of 2004. This new provision responds to the recommendation made in the report for strategic investments in women-specific programmes.

The multi-year funding framework

26. UNDP has identified and innovated a group of five 'drivers of development effectiveness', of which one is 'promoting gender equality'. These drivers are intended, in the course of the MYFF period, to inform intended country programme outcomes under each of the 30 service lines. This approach can become a powerful instrument for mainstreaming and for accountability in the delivery of gender-sensitive programmes and services.

27. The centrality of gender in the MYFF, as the results-based management system of the organization against which progress will be measured on an annual basis, reinforces accountability. Country programmes and regional programmes will need to plan and measure progress in gender mainstreaming in a more deliberate manner than has previously been the case.

28. UNDP intends to make reporting on the drivers, including the driver for promoting gender equality, a key aspect of performance assessment of individual programmes as well as at the global level. This in turn will enable the Executive Board to effectively fulfill in oversight and guidance role.[1]

Pooling resources

29. The assessment recognized efforts made by UNDP and UNIFEM to pool resources together at the country level under the resident coordinator system. It notes that a joint UNDP/UNIFEM assessment of gender expertise in all United Nations organizations in the field provides a solid basis for strengthening the gender thematic groups under the resident coordinator system. This is work in progress within the inter-agency framework, building on the CCA/UNDAF and harmonization processes.

[1] As of 2002, 105 country offices are reporting on gender initiatives through the results-oriented annual report, with a focus on policy setting, capacity building and mainstreaming.

30. In addition, the creation of regional service centres will provide the space for regional pools of gender experts from different organizations to build on their comparative advantage and at the same time work together in close partnership. The assessment raised the issue of 'compartmentalized ways of working' as an impediment to effective mainstreaming. It should be noted that the gender team i BDP is the best illustration of the matrix approach. The matrix expands from a small core team of gender experts located in BDP to the broad network of gender focal points in country offices and regional service centres, and to the gender programme team, with members of all bureaux and gender thematic groups at the country level within the resident coordinator system. The strongest links are made through the community of practice and the gender network, cutting across the organization and integrating the expertise of UNIFEM, as contributors of innovative experiences to be scaled up and replicated by UNDP.

Building internal capacities

31. For gender mainstreaming to become a core strategy, all staff and managers need to be fully trained, equipped and made accountable for the delivery of tangible gender-responsive results. At the same time, a strong team of gender experts needs to pull the organization forward on this agenda. Gender mainstreaming is a long and difficult process of transformation: it requires profound changes in organizational culture and in staff and managers' behaviours and attitudes.

32. The level of commitment that the report identified as a major challenge demands long-term, sustained efforts that transform development effectiveness in terms of both content and process.

33. In the short term, the UNDP Learning Resource Centre and the gender team in the Bureau for Development Policy developed a standard, compulsory training programme for all staff on basic concepts of gender equality. Senior management endorsed it and authorized core funding for its implementation in 2004-2005.

34. An interactive gender training module has been finalized for the larger community of practitioners. A full-fledged training is ongoing for the second year as part of the Virtual Development Academy. Gender training is included in all staff and management briefing and training courses. The tools developed for mainstreaming gender are not limited to a specific core practice alone, since gender mainstreaming draws a panoply of developmental challenges into the human rights framework. The tools for gender-responsive budgeting include governance and parliamentary oversight as well as macroeconomic policies and links all the MDGs to the core objective of investing in gender equality.

Codifying knowledge and developing tools

35. In addition to staff training, UNDP continues to codify knowledge shared across the world among hundreds of members of the gender knowledge network on specific topics. In the past few months alone, a cutting-edge package on gender-responsive budgeting was put on CD-ROM and posted on the website as a comprehensive knowledge product for all staff to refer to in the growing area of gender and macroeconomic policies. Beyond internal capacities, the same services are extended to partners and national experts with the objective of further expanding the pool of gender experts in the field.

36. The role of UNIFEM in the context of the UNDP regional centres is a major step forward in bringing harmonization, alignment and coordination from the

country to the regional level. Efforts are under way to pull gender expertise together, although the overall allocation for gender-related work is still limited and more effort will have to be expended to increase in-house expertise.

IV. Next steps

An independent evaluation of gender mainstreaming in UNDP

37. An independent evaluation of gender mainstreaming in UNDP has been initiated under the leadership of the Evaluation Office. The evaluation will assess the overall performance of UNDP in gender mainstreaming and promoting gender equality. It will look at four specific areas: UNDP commitment to and advocacy for gender mainstreaming and gender equality; the translation of this commitment into UNDP programmes and projects; and the reflection of gender mainstreaming and gender equality in the organization itself and finally in its partnerships.

New 'scorecards' and measures

38. UNDP has a policy for achieving gender balance at all levels of the organization by 2010. Each bureau director will be held responsible for delivering against explicit targets. An organizational 'scorecard' is being developed to monitor progress at all levels and to build managers' responsibility for the implementation of the UNDP policy on gender balance in management and in the work-life policy.

39. Ongoing and new performance assessments of gender programming and management offer unique opportunities for UNDP to innovate with new measures. Measuring gender mainstreaming in programmatic and financial terms is a challenge. There is limited experience in this field, though growing interest exists among mainstream institutions and donor agencies seeking adequate measures of development effectiveness and organizational performance.

40. Institutional transformation in the areas of culture, attitudes and behaviours is rarely undertaken for internal reviews. UNDP is taking the challenges of further exploring the most effective ways to respond to the challenges that most partners face: How do we measure results and account for change through the process of mainstreaming? How do we measure capacities and commitment for results in the absence of staff incentives and management accountability for collective results?

41. In 2005, UNDP will produce a ten-year review of the gender and development indicators (GDI) and the gender empowerment indicators (GEM) initially introduced at the Beijing Conference as part of the human development index in the Human Development Report 1995. It was a breakthrough that helps rank countries on the basis of their performance in a set of key development indicators. The review of ten years of using GDI and GEM indicators will also provide an opportunity to seek alignment with the MDG targets.

UNDP efforts to strengthen staff and managers' commitment to gender policy

42. UNDP has made serious efforts to strengthen staff and managers' commitment in line with its gender policy. Although much remains to be done, and the commitment to gender equality seems uneven across the organization, there are continued efforts in the protracted process of institutional transformation and the current move towards streamlining, harmonization and development effectiveness.

43. In conclusion, the reports states that there is "an urgent need to take stock, reaffirm commitments and resource efforts with top managers leading the way, and holing staff accountable for results". UNDP has moved forward in all these dimensions, but much more remains to be done. The current in-depth, independent evaluation is expected to provide further insight on the way forward.

V. UNDP-UNIFEM joint action

44. A UNDP-UNIFEM joint plan of action builds on the MYFFs of the two organizations. It highlights the mandate of UNIFEM as a laboratory for the United Nations system on the 'how-to' of achieving gender equality and the UNDP capacity to scale up innovation through its representation in 130 countries, close partnership with governments, and management of the resident coordinator system.

45. The plan incorporates three features to improve coherence between UNDP and UNIFEM and to bring them closer together in their work on their respective MYFFs:

(a) While respecting existing mandates and legislative decisions, we are determined to take further advantage of the respective strengths of our two organizations and to achieve integration where it matters most: in the field, at the programme level. The UNIFEM regional programmes and the UNDP regional centres will join to become the regional hubs for expanded knowledge and action on gender equality. In the three sites where UNDP regional centres and UNIFEM regional programme directors are co-located (Bangkok, Bratislava and Dakar), joint work planning has begun and lessons will be drawn to shape the way forward.

(b) At the programme level, in-depth joint analysis by UNDP and UNIFEM has begun in three areas: governance, HIV/AIDS and crisis prevention and recovery. This will expand to other bureaux and practices. Priority areas will be drawn from the respective MYFFs, where UNIFEM has the knowledge, experience and capacity for joint programming, further scaling up, and policy and programmatic coherence. Concrete actions and outcomes will be reported in forthcoming joint UNDP/UNIFEM/UNFPA reports on the MYFFs.

(c) Under the strategic direction and policy guidance of the UNDP Administrator, there will be unity of leadership on the gender issue between UNDP and UNIFEM. The Executive Director of UNIFEM has an important role to play in strengthening the active engagement of UNDP in gender mainstreaming efforts where much learning is drawn from the innovative work of UNIFEM and its vision for coordinated action in the resident coordinator system.

46. Progress on the implementation of this joint UNDP-UNIFEM action plan will be reported regularly to the Executive Board, including innovative ideas for further support at the country and regional levels and for scaling up the work on gender in the context of the reform agenda of the United Nations Secretary-General.